



DO YOU HAVE ENOUGH FEED?

Recent use of stored hay to overcome the effects of the late summer drought has raised the question of the availability of stored hay for the coming winter.

There are several factors that must be considered to accurately predict winter hay needs. These include:

- The nutritional requirements of the cattle to be fed
- The quality of the hay to be fed
- How the hay was stored

- How the hay will be fed
- How much hay is available.

As we have discussed before in this column, beef cows have changing nutritional needs based on the particular stage of production.

Spring-calving cows that are pregnant are at their lowest nutritional needs for the year. A 1,300-pound pregnant cow that has already weaned her calf needs about 20-25 pounds of dry matter daily, but that feed can be some lower quality stuff. She can meet her energy needs with hay or good

straw that is only 45-50 percent TDN and 9-10 percent protein.

As long as she maintains her weight, she is probably getting enough feed. As these cows get to 30 days before calving, the energy and protein needs go up, and some better quality feed will be needed.

In this case, the hay better be at least 50 percent TDN and 10 percent protein at maximum intake. Finally, at calving and for the next 60 days, the cow's energy needs are raised by 50 percent and her protein needs are doubled. Most hay cannot meet this energy need and some kind of supplemental feed (usually grain) will be needed. A good mix of legumes in the hay will meet the protein needs for most of these cows.

As one can imagine, no two bales of hay have the same nutritional value, even if they came from the same field. Those from two different farms can be vastly different in value, even if they "look" alike. Whenever there is a shortage of hay, the need for a good analysis of the feed is greatest.

This analysis is the only way to

make the most of a limited supply. In addition to feed quality, the actual amount available must be known.

Cattle are fed by the pound and not by the bale. Storage, bale size, and feeding losses can all affect the pounds available to the herd. Big bales stored outside will lose 30 percent or more of their feed value, so just remember to subtract one-third of the total number of bales stored outside from the total on hand.

Bales under plastic will lose about 16 percent, and those in a barn will lose about 5 percent of their value. The well-advertised "1,000-pound bale" only exists if it has been weighed and you know for certain there is that much hay in the bale.

My experience some years ago showed the baler that "made 1,000-pound bales" seldom made one that weighed more than 900 pounds.

What does it all add up to? Let's take an example: you have 40 spring-calving beef cows to be fed from Nov. 1 to May 1 (181 days) on hay that is mostly grass in big

bales stacked in a barn that probably have 900 pounds of dry matter each. You will feed in conventional ring feeders. How much feed do you need?

We will make the arbitrary cutoff for cow needs at Nov. 1 until Feb. 1 (stage 1), Feb. 1 until April 1 (stage 2), and April 1 and after (stage 3).

Stage 1: each cow needs 25 pounds of dry matter times 40 cows times 61 days is 61,000 pounds of hay or 68 bales. Feed losses are 8 percent and storage losses are 5 percent, so the total need becomes 78 bales.

We will assume an analysis has shown the hay is 51 percent TDN and 10.4 percent protein, so we can meet the stage 2 needs of the cows with a full feed of the hay. Therefore we will simply add another 78 bales for the next two months.

For stage 3 we will feed hay for the 30 days before turnout, so we will feed 39 bales (half of 78). We will also need to add a pound of corn or an equivalent energy feed to the ration to meet their energy needs.

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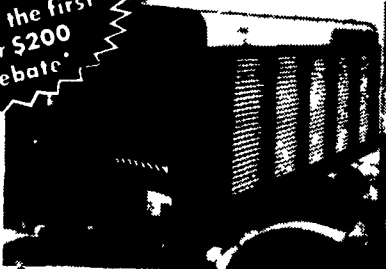
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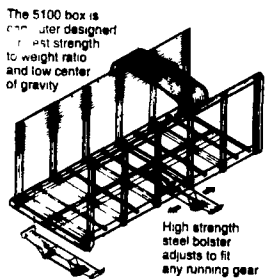
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